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THE MONASTIC CONCEPT OF PURITY OF HEART AND ITS SOURCES

V. SYMEON-MACARIUS, THE SCHOOL OF EVAGRIUS PONTICUS, AND THE APOPTHEGMATA PATRUM

In turning from St. Basil to the Pseudo-Macarius of Egypt (or Symeon of Mesopotamia), one is impressed by certain similarities in their fundamental conception of the Christian life. Both are perfectionists who refuse to compromise or to seek an accommodation with the world. The attainment of a certain level of good conduct or ascetic performance will not suffice, since Christians must live by the unlimited demands of the Gospel. A life on this level demands the rectitude of the basic dispositions, the elimination of all double-mindedness—purity of heart.

Such similarities are not surprising, since both men worked within a similar Syrian monastic milieu and since there was undoubtedly a certain mutual influence between the circle to which Symeon-Macarius belonged and the Cappadocian Fathers.¹ Of course there are important differences as well, which it will be instructive to consider.

Although no definitive study of the spirituality of Symeon-Macarius can be undertaken until the completion of the critical edition of his remaining works,² it would be unthinkable to leave him out of the picture in any consideration of the monastic concept of purity of heart. Comparable to Evagrius Ponticus in his influence on later spirituality, both in the East and in the West, his teaching suffered

¹ Cf. J. GRIGNAULT, *Le monachisme au sein de l'Eglise en Syrie et en Cappadoce*, in *Studi monastica*, 7 (1965), 19-20.

² At present two collections have been published, with several more to follow: E. KOSTERMAN-DE BERTHOUD, *Neue Homilien des Makarios-Symeon. I aus Typus III* (Texte und Untersuchungen, 72), Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1961 (references to this edition will be designated by the abbreviation *New Rom.*); H. DÖRRIES-E. KOSTERMAN-DE BERTHOUD, *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios* (Patristische Texte und Studien, 4), Berlin, Gruyter, 1964 (references to the fifty spiritual homilies will be designated by the abbreviation *Hom.*).

an almost identical fate. That is, it was passed on mainly under pseudonyms and in a denatured form, though in the case of Symeon-Macarius the denaturing process was accomplished less through the alterations of copyists and translators than through the very ambiguity of the original language. At various times and by various critics these writings have been considered classics of early Egyptian monasticism (on the basis of the attribution to Macarius of Egypt in most of the manuscripts and in Migne); Messalian works (L. Villecourt and others)³ or even the lost *Asketikon* of the Messalian heretics (H. Dörries);⁴ a survival of primitive Christianity (L. Bouyer),⁵ and an integral part of the Syrian spiritual tradition (G. Quispel, A. Baker).⁶

Today there seems to be no reason to disagree with the judgment of J. Gribomont that Symeon-Macarius is the writer or teacher to whose works "the condemnation of the (anti-Messalian) councils... indisputably refer."⁷ This has been amply demonstrated by Dörries in pointing out the parallels and in some cases even the identity between the texts of the conciliar condemnations and the Pseudo-Macarian works.⁸ At the same time, geographical and historical references leave no doubt that these works were written by a native of Mesopotamia and thus belong to Syrian monasticism. The powerful and archaic Syrian tradition is closely related to what Hausherr, followed by Bouyer, calls the "primitive spirituality" of the post-apostolic age⁹ and to what Daniélou terms "Jewish Christianity",¹⁰ in contrast with the Greek intellectualist spirituality stemming from Alexandria.

On the basis of literary resemblances and similarities of thought Quispel locates the Pseudo-Macarian corpus within a certain sector of Syriac or Aramaic spirituality which includes the Gospel of Thomas, the Acts of Thomas, and the *Liber Graduum*. A. Baker, after first arguing for an Egyptian provenance, now agrees with Quispel in assigning it a Syrian origin. Recently these two writers arrived inde-

³ Cf. L. VILLECOURT, *La date et l'origine des 'homélies spirituelles' attribuées à Macaire, in Comptes rendus de l'Académie d'Inscriptions et de Belles-Lettres* (1920), 250-258. See other bibliographic references in J. QUASTEN, *Patrology*, III (Westminster, Md., Newman, 1960), pp. 163, 165.

⁴ Cf. Symeon von Mesopotamien (Texte und Untersuchungen, 55, 1), Berlin, 1941. See also Dörries' commentary in *Die 50 reinlichen Homilien*, cited above.

⁵ *Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers* (New York, Descoe, 1960), 369 ff.

⁶ G. QUISPEL, *The Syrian Thomas and the Syrian Macarius*, in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 18 (1964), 226-235; A. BAKER, *Pseudo-Macarius and the Gospel of Thomas*, *ibid.*, 215-225.

⁷ *Le monachisme au sein de l'Eglise en Syrie et en Cappadoce*, p. 18.

⁸ See note 4 above.

⁹ *Les grands courants de la spiritualité orientale*, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 1 (1935), 114-138.

¹⁰ J. DANIÉLOU, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Chicago, Regnery, 1964).

pendently at the same conclusion: the Pseudo-Macarian writings contain striking similarities to the Gospel of Thomas, a work which combines Syrian-Jewish-Christian spirituality with Gnostic tendencies.¹¹ The Fathers of the second and third centuries often had to combat the sort of exaggeration which it contains by recalling the importance of the resurrection, good works, and the body, all characteristic of Jewish and biblical notions.¹²

It is interesting to note how many of the parallels which have been found between the Gospel of Thomas and Gospel variants or agapha in the works of Symeon-Macarius are concerned with the interior, the importance of the "inside". Both works have the same variant (found also in the *Vita Antonii*)¹³ of Luke 17:21, "The kingdom of heaven (not 'of God', as in the canonical text) is within you."¹⁴ The homilies also contain a parallel to Logion 22, "... When you make the two one, and if you make the inside as the outside, etc."¹⁵ And regarding the similar use by "Thomas" and Symeon-Macarius of Luke 11:39-40, regarding the washing of the inside and the outside of the cup, Dom Baker states, "To them it is the inside that is purgatory: and by 'inside' they mean the psychological and moral interior of the individual man. For Macarius this is a fundamental point in his teaching. The interior alone matters: by comparison the outward acts of justification are worthless."¹⁶ Elsewhere Baker claims that this stress on the interior, on the heart, is especially characteristic not only of the Gospel of Thomas but of early Syriac spirituality as a whole. "For Syriac writers, Christianity was the revelation of a divine Spirit dwelling in man and fighting against moral evil..."¹⁷ In contrast with what we are told of the ascetic feats of the real Macarius of Egypt, the Pseudo-Macarius "does not mention external observances and certainly not his own... His whole concern is with internal purity and the struggle against evil desire and hatreds."

¹¹ See note 6 above. At the same time, Quispel holds that "Thomas" has its source in Alexandrian Hellenistic Judaism. Cf. G. QUISPEL, *L'Evangile selon Thomas et les origines de l'ascétisme chrétien*, in *Aspects du Judaïsme-Christianisme*, Colloque de Strasbourg 23-25 avril 1964 (Paris, 1965), 48-49.

¹² See *The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and Its Sources*, 11, in *Studia monastica*, 8 (1966), 201-203. R. M. Grant writes of the Nascent system, which is closely related to the Gospel of Thomas: "What we find in this Gnostic system is a complete spiritualization of the Christian gospel." R. M. Grant with D. N. FREEMAN, *The Secret Sayings of Jesus* (London, Fontana, 1960), 83-84.

¹³ Ch. 20, P.G., 873 A.

¹⁴ Baker, p. 221.

¹⁵ Horn, 34, 2. Cf. Baker, pp. 223-224.

¹⁶ P. 217.

¹⁷ A. BAKER, *Syriac and the Origins of Monasticism*, in *Downside Review*, October, 1968, p. 346, quoting F. C. Buckitt.

"... with the internal disorder of the heart."¹⁸ That is, with purity of heart.

Heart

Symeon-Macarius' concept of the heart has been studied by A. Guillaumont, who relates it to a «*mystique du coeur*» distinguished from a more Platonist or intellectualist mysticism by a preference for the metaphoric use of the word heart. Though noticeable in all the spiritual writers belonging to the primitive or popular Oriental tradition, whether Egyptian or Syrian, this preference «is particularly manifest in Diadochus of Photice, the Pseudo-Macarius, author of the *Spiritual Homilies*, and Hesychius; it is noteworthy that it appears above all in authors who, in contrast to speculative mysticism, are representatives of an experiential mysticism.»¹⁹

For Symeon-Macarius the heart is the interior, the governing-center which controls all the rest of the faculties and members by means of the «thoughts» that flow out of it.²⁰ Often it is synonymous with the mind, *nous*, but more exactly, the *nous* is in the heart, as is, for that matter, the entire universe, and especially the spiritual forces of good and evil.

«The mind (*nous*) is in the heart; the heart is a small vessel containing dragons, lions, poisonous beasts, and all the treasures of evil. Likewise again it contains God, it holds the angels, it holds life and the kingdom, it contains the light and the apostles, the treasures of grace, it contains everything.»²¹

The Co-habitation of the Two Spirits

The heart contains everything, both good and evil, even after

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 352-363; 350.
¹⁹ A. GUILLAUMONT, *Sens des Noms du Coeur dans l'Antiquité*, in *Le Coeur* (Études Carmelitaines, Desclée de Brouwer, 1950), 75-79. In the light of Guillaumont's descriptions of this «mystique du coeur» A. Kemmer finds some close similarities between the doctrine of Symeon-Macarius and that of the Letters of Ammonas; see his *Gregor von Nyssa und Ps. Makkaris. Der Meschianismus im Joch der Hirsensynstik*, in *Antonius Magnus Eremita (Studia Assecliana, 35; Rome, 1956)*, 268-282.

²⁰ *Hom.* 15, 20, 21, 34.
²¹ *Hom.* 43, 7. Cf. Aphraates' teaching that the heart contains every created thing, *Demonstrationes*, 14, 35 (*Patrologia Syriaca*, I, ed. J. Pataison), col. 663 and 666. This concept closely corresponds to a common concept in Indian spirituality, first recorded in the Upanishads, that inner space duplicates outer space, so that «Heaven and Earth, Fire and Air, Sun and Moon, Light and Stars and everything there is in the world, and all that is not, is enclosed in the heart»; cf. SYAM ANANDANANDA, *La notion du coeur dans la vie spirituelle de l'Inde*, in *Le coeur* (Études Carmelitaines, Desclée de Brouwer, 1950), p. 89.

baptism; and this precisely, constitutes the problem for Symeon-Macarius. When asked if evil enters from without, and so can be either accepted or rejected, he quotes Matthew 25:19 to show that evil thoughts proceed from the heart. As further proof he appeals to daily experience:

«If you say that sin has been condemned through the coming of Christ, and that after baptism evil has no fodder for thinking [evil] (*didogizesithai*) in the heart; are you not aware that since the coming of the Lord until now all who were baptized have had evil thoughts? Or did none of them ever turn towards vainglory, fornication, or gluttony? Do all the men of the world (*kosmikai*) who dwell in the Church have their hearts spotless and pure? Or do we find that after baptism many sins are perpetrated and many stray? It is written: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart' (Dt. 6:5). You will say: 'I do love Him, and I have the Holy Spirit.' Do you have memory (*mnemen*) and love and burning desire directed towards the Lord? Are you devoted [to Him] night and day? If you have this love, you are pure. If you do not have it, seek where it was taken away by earthly occupations and by impure and evil thoughts...»²²

The reference to baptism here seems definitely meant for the visible Christian sacrament of baptism, since Symeon-Macarius is talking about worldly men in the Church. It is necessary to ascertain this point, since, as Father Hausherr points out,²³ «baptism» in the homilies usually refers to a Pentecostal «spirit baptism» rather than to the «water baptism» of the Church. The question which we have just heard Symeon-Macarius answer—whether evil arises from within or from outside the heart—was one of the controversial subjects of the time.

Diadochus of Photice, who engaged in the controversy on the opposite side, taught that the fact that evil thoughts proceed from the heart after baptism, whether because of their psychological origin or from the heart's consent to those of demonic origin, does not prove that Satan acts in any other way than from outside the soul of the baptized.²⁴

For Symeon-Macarius, on the other hand, the experience of evil thoughts is an irrefutable proof of Satan's presence within. True,

²² *Hom.* 15, 13-15.
²³ *L'Esprit fondamental et la logique du Messianisme*, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, I (1935), 352.

²⁴ *Diadoque de Photice: Œuvres spirituelles* (Sources chrétiennes, 5; Paris, Cerf, 1953), p. 83. For further Macarian texts on the subject of the demon in the heart after baptism, see the introduction by E. DES PLACES, pp. 16-17.

Christ thrust the demons down from the throne of the thoughts.²⁵ But Satan enters the heart of a Christian who consents to an evil thought, just as he entered into Eve when she obeyed his suggestion, becoming a second soul mixed in with the first and giving rise to evil thoughts.²⁶ After baptism the devil still retains a foothold within the heart, since although Christ condemned Sin and cast it out, he left it the power of «thinking evil» or being conceived in the heart. Sin is like a soldier who left his traveling-chariot in a house and so has the right to come and go there as he pleases. The demon enters the heart when invited to do so by the conception of an evil thought. Since the invitation is so frequently extended, and since in spite of these distinctions the notions of sin, demon, evil thought, concupiscence are so closely related as to be almost synonymous, the result is the simultaneous presence of God and the devil, good and evil thoughts, within the heart after baptism until the full purification by the Holy Spirit.²⁷

In spite of what he considered the undeniable evidence for his argument, Symeon-Macarius met with some difficulty in upholding his position in the controversy. The thought that God and the Devil could be together in the heart seemed incomprehensible to many, especially the more naïve. Another question in what according to Dörries is the Messalian catechism or *asketikon* is «whether Satan can be with God, either in the air or in men?» The answer given is that God is not circumscribed and limited only to a separate realm cut off from evil. Just as the sun is not polluted by the filth on which it shines, neither is God.²⁸ The real or hypothetical questioner would apparently have been influenced by the traditional belief in what might be termed the «sensitivity» of the Holy Spirit. Who could, in Scriptural terminology, be «grieved,» or, in non-biblical and more primitive materialistic and non-personal terms, be soiled, by the admittance of sin into the heart causing Him (or it) to depart. This notion, found in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, has affinities with Qumran. It is related to the common theme running through all the writings of the post-Apostolic period of the basic unnaturalness and schizophrenia of the condition of *dipsuchia*, doublemindedness, «the co-

²⁵ *Hom.* 6, 5.
²⁶ *Hom.* 15, 13; 28, 34, 35.

²⁷ *Hom.* 15, 14.

²⁸ *Hom.* 7, 2; cf. *Hom.* 16, 3 and 5. It is interesting to find a similar metaphor, but in the Platonic framework of the *novis* in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: «For as the sun is not defiled by shining over dung and filth, but rather drieth up both and driveth away the bad smell: so also the pure mind (*noûs*), constrained among the defilements of the earth, rather purifieth and itself suffers no defilement.» *Test. Bevil.*, 83. Cf. *Test. Levi*, 14:3.

existence of sin and grace»²⁹ a fact of experience whose existence it is Symeon-Macarius' main concern to demonstrate and to strive to eliminate.

The Expectation of Purity of Heart and the Indwelling Spirit

In order to understand his position, it is necessary to be aware of the Jewish, early Christian, and Patristic thinking on the matter of the purification of the heart by the Holy Spirit. The outstanding element of the primitive spirituality is, according to Bouyer,³⁰ the pursuit of *haploies*, simplicity of heart, by means of the elimination of *dipsuchia*, the inner process, based on the notion of the two spirits, whereby the Holy Spirit replaces the spirit of evil within the heart. This same concept is the basis of much of later patristic spirituality. It is absolutely central in the works of Symeon-Macarius. For if the fundamental error of these works and of the movement from which they stem lies in the search for and the reliance upon feelings and experience as the basic criterion for the presence of grace and of the Holy Spirit,³¹ their main concern is with actually attaining such a state of purity of heart and the presence of the Holy Spirit, an essential prerequisite being the recognition of being in a state of *dipsuchia*. Perhaps a second Messalian error is equally fundamental: the expectation of *apatheia* as the condition of soul in Messianic times.

If we ask why the experience of impulses to evil together with impulses to good creates a problem for Symeon-Macarius, and indeed for ancient Christian theology as a whole, the answer lies in an age-old expectation dating back to pre-Christian Judaism.³² This hope was especially strong among the people of Qumran, who, on the basis of earlier promises given by Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah, believed that the Messianic gift of the Holy Spirit announced by Joel would put an end to the eternal battle between the spirits of good and evil by giving the heart a spontaneous propensity to the good. The same belief was prevalent in other sectors of Judaism, as attested by the rabbinical teaching concerning the good and evil impulses: the *yezer hara* will not be completely overcome until the Messiah comes. Chri-

²⁹ Cf. Bouyer, p. 379.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

³¹ Cf. note 23 above.

³² See *The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and Its Sources*, I, in *Studia monastica*, 8 (1966), 12 ff.

stianity teaches that the Messiah has come; according to these expectations, sin and the inclination to evil should no longer exist.

Of course all this is connected with the tension between the «already» and the «not yet.» Unfortunately, much of the post-apostolic and patristic theologizing on this matter continues along the lines of popular Jewish tradition and does not attain the depth and the realism of the New Testament. True, «According to the New Testament a Christian is one who essentially and normally does not commit sin; the redemption won by Christ has always an efficacious and, in itself, the definitive value.»³³ Evil does not become impossible, however: the redemption does not effect *apatheia* by removing the evil impulse or concupiscence, or, to use St. Paul's own terminology, by completely conquering the «flesh» or «sin.» «... this liberation from sin, though radical in principle, always remains in a precarious condition during our mortal life on earth, inasmuch as it is always possible for Christians to fall again under the domination of sin (Rom. 6:12 ff.), which makes use of the 'flesh'... that has indeed in them been 'crucified' through baptism but not completely vanquished (Rom. 6:8).»³⁴ In the Christian the flesh still battles the spirit (1 Cor. 3:1-3) as long as the body has not been clothed in immortality (1 Cor. 15:54), since

«The Pauline conception of the Spirit, and hence of Baptism, is... always eschatological. The Spirit is still the Holy Spirit of promise, the token first-instalment of the ultimate redemption of that which God has sealed as His own (Eph. 1:13). Possession of the Spirit is a guarantee and assurance of the hope of the age to come, for it is a partial fulfilment of that hope within the present order. It is a pledge that in the final consummation 'what is mortal' will be 'swallowed up of life' (2 Cor. 5:4).»³⁵

But not all Christians, especially the more simple, were able to grasp the distinction between a purification of the heart and a gift of the Spirit bestowed essentially and in principle but to be perfected only at the second coming and their actual experience of sin or of impulses of sin continuing along with redemption, especially after it was realised that the Parousia would be delayed. If the Spirit had been given in baptism, why was there not total purity now?

³³ J. HANSCHEN, and L. H. HARTMAN, *Sin*, in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1963), 2229.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2227.

³⁵ G. W. H. LAMPE, *The Seal of the Spirit. A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers* (New York, Longmans, 1951), 57.

The Time of the Spirit's Coming

The New Testament itself implies the possibility of various times and modes of receiving the Holy Spirit, whether in connection with baptism (Acts 2:38), by the laying-on of hands as in Samaria (Acts 8:16-18), by a combination of baptism and the imposition of hands as at Ephesus (Acts 19:5-6), or by a special descent unaccompanied by any rite, as in the case of Cornelius (Acts 10:44) and at Pentecost (Acts 2:4). The fact that the reception of the Holy Spirit could be separated from baptism and that certain New Testament and patristic references could imply such a separation has led some theologians, especially Anglicans, to «allow to water-baptism only the effect of blotting out sins and the *preparation* of a temple for the Spirit.»³⁶ The reason for this distinction in the minds of some in the early Church can only be the composite character of Christian baptism, which was conceived as, and actually historically was, a Jewish rite transformed by Christianity. To this Jewish baptism for the forgiveness of sins, which in the case of John and of Qumran was a rite of Messianic expectation and preparation, was added the Messianic and eschatological baptism in the Holy Spirit. Later this concept of a composite and thus divisible phenomenon was expressed in both the sacramental and moral-ascetical orders, giving rise to rites of conferral of the Holy Spirit by anointing after baptism, which later became separated in the West into a distinct sacrament of confirmation, and also to the Messianic expectation of a cleansing and sanctifying descent of the Holy Spirit unaccompanied by any rite. Of course it is not really a question, of merely adding on to the original Jewish baptism of Qumran, of John, or of proselytes³⁷ to form a composite. As O. Cullmann and others have shown, the preparatory Jewish baptism of John, received by Jesus, and presumably by all the apostles as well, before the Spirit-baptism of Pentecost, was essentially transformed at the time of John's baptism of Jesus, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son Jesus' baptism was «regarded first, as the Synoptists and the Fourth Gospel both imply, as the foreshadowing and symbolical summing up of His mission as Son and Servant of God, of His death, resurrection and ascension and of the New Covenant to be inaugurated in these events, and secondly, as the event which prefigured and made possible the Pentecostal fulfilment of the ancient hope of a universal outpouring of the Spirit upon the people of God.»³⁸

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

³⁷ See *The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart*, II, p. 193 ff.

³⁸ *Lampe*, p. 33.

Theologically, of course, it is impossible to separate the purifying effects of baptism from the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ. St. Paul recognized that.³⁹ But because of the historically composite character of the Christian baptism, the two baptisms, of water and of the Holy Spirit did actually become separated, in some minds at least, as was expressed in the development of rites and in the expectation of the coming of the Spirit to complete baptism and to perfect the mature Christian.

By the end of the fifth century more or less satisfactory solutions were worked out both in the area of sacramental theology and in spirituality,⁴⁰ but during Symeon-Macarius' time a great deal of confusion still existed. Macarius was one of the first teachers to point out some of the inconsistencies and spiritual dangers of this situation and to attempt — unsuccessfully, one must conclude — to settle the confusion.

Symeon-Macarius' theories of the spiritual life are largely an attempt to deal logically and helpfully with the experienced and theological problems of the co-habitation in the heart of the two spirits and the co-existence of grace and concupiscence after baptism and even after certain mystical experiences. The excellent study of Macarian and Messalian spirituality published by Father Irénée Hausherr⁴¹ discusses these matters so thoroughly and perceptively that it leaves little to be added except, perhaps the implications of the Jewish and Qumranian origin of the «Two Spirits» theme.

The Egyptian Tradition

In the question of the coming of the Holy Spirit, Symeon-Macarius followed the tradition, not of the «realized» baptismal purity of heart of the Syrian Aphraates, but of several Egyptians, such as the Pseudo-Barnabas, Antony, Ammonas, and Pachomius, who thought of some sort of non-baptismal coming of the Spirit, whether eschatological or taking place during this life. The Pseudo-Barnabas, believed to have been a converted Alexandrian Jew or Gentile, teaches that baptism into Christ is a new creation which confers a partial purification and a sort of exorcism from evil spirits. Apparently he believes in the

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 50 ff.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 297 ff.

⁴¹ See note 23, above. Cf. also H. Dörries, *Urtitel und Verurteilung. Ein Beitrag zum Umgang der alten Kirche mit Häretikern*, in *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 55 (1964), 78-94, and P. Migne, *Les caractères de l'ascétisme spirituelle selon le pseudo-Macaire*, in *Irénikon*, 39 (1966), 497-513.

coming of the divine Spirit in baptism: «We go down (into the water) laden with sin and filth»; we rise from it «bearing fruit in the heart, having fear and hope in Jesus in the Spirit».⁴² Nevertheless, he expects another purification on the basis of an appeal to experience very similar to that made by Symeon-Macarius. In his argumentation he uses the same «theme» of purity of heart as the True Sabbath that we find in the Macarian works — no doubt he is the ultimate source for this theme, as for so many others. Commenting on an altered version of one of the ten commandments, «Sanctify also the Sabbath of the Lord with pure hands and a pure heart,» he remarks,

«If, then, anyone has at present the power to keep holy the day which God made holy, by being pure in heart, we are altogether deceived. See that we shall indeed keep it holy at that time when we enjoy the good rest, when we shall be able to do so because we have been made righteous ourselves and have received the promise, when there is no more sin, but all things have been made new by the Lord: then we shall be able to keep it holy because we ourselves have first been made holy.»⁴³

⁴² *Epistle of Barnabas*, II, 11. In some manuscripts, however, the words «in the Spirit» are missing.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 15, 1, 6-7. There are a number of other possible sources for Symeon-Macarius' use of the theme of the true Sabbath as purity of heart. Logion 27 of the Gospel of Thomas says, «... If you keep not the Sabbath as Sabbath, you will not see the Father.» while the parallel Oxyrhynchus fragment from papyrus I, no. 2, has, «If you do not fast from the world, you will not find the kingdom of God, and if you will not observe the Sabbath (the sabbatize to sabbatize), you will not see the Father.» The parallel with the beatitude of Mt. 5:8 indicates that the first part of the phrase, «if you keep not the Sabbath as Sabbath,» means, «if you do not have purity of heart,» since the conclusion is the same as that of the beatitude «you will not see God.» Justin (*Did.*, 14, 2) and Origen (*Hom.*, Num., 22, 4) equate the true Sabbath with cessation from sin, and Justin, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus continue «Barnabas'» millenarist typology of the Sabbath (Jean Duvetion, *Message évangélique et culture hellénistique*, Paris, Desclée, 1961, p. 248). Speaking of how the man of the Gospel spiritualizes and fulfills the Law, St. Gregory of Nyssa remarks, «He keeps holy the Sabbath day by abstaining from sin, but he does not cease from acts of virtue, for he has learned that it is lawful, to do good on the Sabbath.» (*Comm. in Cant.*, Sermon 5, P.G. 44, 877D). In a similar section on the Law and the Gospel appended to *Hom.*, 28, the last of the «New Homilies», Macarius tells the monks to be true Jews by «keeping Sabbath in all things through rest from vain thoughts and filthy desires» (p. 167, lines 27-30). Don Baker (p. 221) has pointed out that the last part of this sentence, *sabbatizati pantele*, corresponds to an *agapion esse qui docuit illis* in *omni re sabbatizare*. The word *sabbatize* is also found in another *agapion* preserved by several of the Fathers: *Sabbatizati humas ho kainos nomos diagenitos elhidel* (Riesch, Ag. 74, p. 99; Baurer, p. 220). Macarius' fullest treatment of the subject is given in *Homily 35*: «The soul that is worthy celebrates a feast to the Spirit, with joy and unspeakable exultation, and smelt... and they celebrate a feast to the Spirit, with joy and unspeakable exultation, and offer a pure worship pleasing to God from a pure heart, that is the true and holy Sabbath» (*Hom.*, 35, 1 and 3). The whole meaning of the true Sabbath is summed up in the word «rest» *anapausis*. «The rest» of Christians (cf. Heb. 4:11) is liberation from the passions of sin and the fullness of the Holy Spirit in a pure heart and edification in *anapausis* denotes the mutual rest of man in God and God in the heart in an experience of peace and plenitude (*pleirotelia*). Cf. Matur, pp. 497-513.

Judging from the use of similar themes by the Gnostics and by Symeon-Macarius, the words «rest» and «promise» refer to an inner divine presence and the gift of the Spirit which fully purifies the heart. Almost the only difference between the concept of purity of heart as held by «Barnabas» and «Macarius» is that for the former the coming is to take place eschatologically, after six thousand years, while the former conceives of it as being granted during the Christian's life.

It was probably the Gnostics who de-eschatologized the full purification by the Holy Spirit, just as Lampe holds that it was they who introduced «the first clear evidence of that separation of water-baptism and Spirit-baptism which so many writers have read into the New Testament...»⁴⁴ In the case of the Marcosians,

«the water-baptism for the remission of sins is distinguished from the baptism of redemption or of perfection, which may take various forms... The former was 'psychic', the latter 'spiritual'... The second, pneumatic, baptism might be administered in several ways», such as by affusion or anointing. «Some, however, regarded all such ceremonies as superfluous, and maintained that the true *lutrosia* was obtained purely through *gnosis*.»⁴⁵

Gnostic influence can be seen in Clement of Alexandria's belief in purification from the passions through a second baptism of *gnosis*, not necessarily eschatological but possible even during the present life. He taught, however, that this second baptism was merely a development of the first, when the Holy Spirit was received, together with *gnosis* as an essential grace identical with faith.⁴⁶

Origen had a very profound concept of purification and spiritualization as a continuum, beginning with baptism as the essential *typos* and extending throughout the spiritual life, to be consummated in an eschatological baptism with fire.⁴⁷ St. Antony's letters attribute full cleansing from evil thoughts to the Holy Spirit, Who comes into the heart of the mature monk as fire. As we have seen, the close kinship of the *mystique du coeur* or the *Herzensmystik* as found in the Letters of Ammonas and the Pseudo-Macarian writings has been pointed

⁴⁴ Lampe, p. 124.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* I, HAUSHEER traces the concept to the Valentinian Gnostics in *Vocation chrétienne et vocation monastique selon les Pères*, in *Laticia et Sabine*, Vol. I: *Laticia et Vie Chrétienne* (Paris, 1963), 42.

⁴⁶ See *The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and Its Sources*, II, in *Studia monastica*, 10 (1960), 14, 16. See also A. ORR, *Teologia bautizmal de Clemente Alexandrinu*, in *Crortianum*, 36 (1955), 446.

⁴⁷ See *The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart*, III, p. 40 ff.

out by Guillaumont and Kemmer.⁴⁸ Antony's successor taught that the monk's whole effort should be directed to obtaining the *dynamis*, the Holy Spirit, through prayer for this gift and the spiritual combat. The sign of the Spirit's coming is an experience of great joy.⁴⁹

There are also some striking resemblances in the Pachomian writings. In one of the Coptic Lives it is said that the presence of evil thoughts gives the soul a kinship with the devil and invites him to come to dwell in it, while freedom from evil thoughts brings about the coming of the Holy Spirit. In an Arabic life Silvanos is represented as having «become a new man, through a second birth, so much so that he has become perfect in purity of heart through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.» Who has filled him from head to toe.⁵⁰ There does not seem to be a great deal of difference between the teachings of Ammonas and Pachomius and those of Symeon-Macarius. The sources reveal little about their concept of the relation between baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit, although Veilleux has pointed out the importance of baptism and the eucharist for the Pachomians as the basis of all Christian and monastic life.⁵¹

Spirit-baptism for Symeon-Macarius

As for Symeon-Macarius, although he disagreed with those who held that baptism takes away the power of sin, he did not deny the power of the redemption, or even that baptism has a certain efficacy. Some passages suggest a direct effect of the events of the incarnation and redemption on the heart without any sacramental medium.⁵² He makes the same distinction as the author of the *Liber Graduum* between the small charisms or pledges given by the bridegroom before the marriage (healing, *gnosis*, revelations) and the great gift

⁴⁸ See *ibid.* IV, in *Studia monastica*, 11 (1969), 283, and note 19 above.

⁴⁹ See *The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart*, IV, p. 284.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

⁵¹ A. VIELLEUX, *La liturgie dans le catholicisme pachomien au quatrième siècle* (Studia Aneptiana, 57, Rome, 1960), especially pp. 196-225.

⁵² Metaphorically but really, the actions of the redemption were enacted simultaneously on the cross and in the heart. All the outer observances of the Old Law were shadows of what was to come in the New Law, when they would be fulfilled in the soul or heart. As the blood of Christ, the true Passover lamb, was poured out upon the cross, it anointed the doorposts of the heart (Hom. 47, 8). The descent into Hell and the resurrection also took place in the heart: «Christ went down into two parts, the depths (*butyros*) of Hades and again into the depths (*butyros*)» (see Dörries' note on *butyros*, Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien, p. 77 and p. 200); cf. also 11, 11, where Symeon-Macarius warns his hearers not to think of the events of the New Testament as having happened in the distant past. They happened, and continue to happen, within their own hearts. Cf. also Hom. 43, 3, and Hom. 6, 5.

of «full *koïnônia*, that is, *agapē*, which, since it never changes or falls away (cf. I Cor. 13:8), makes those who desire it *apatheis* and free from blows.»⁵³ Only one who has received a Pentecostal experience of *agapē* whereby the Holy Spirit becomes mixed in with the soul has put on power from on high and been filled with divinity.⁵⁴ Thus, as Hausherr points out, the «state of grace» and of divine sonship begins not with sacramental baptism but with an inwardly felt «baptism with fire and the Holy Spirit.»⁵⁵

Though sacramental baptism may have a certain efficacy, it does not really change anything very much. After baptism the heart is still the battle-ground for the struggle for dominance between the Two Spirits that it was before the Messiah's coming according to the theology of Qumran. Experience shows that it is still in a state of double-mindedness, *dipsuchia*, until it experiences the fullness of the Spirit which gives *apatheia*.

Levels of the spiritual life

On the basis of these two underlying concepts and «fundamental errors» of the Macarian spirituality, namely the reliance on experience or as a criterion for the presence of grace and the belief in *apatheia* or purity of heart as the goal of the Christian life, the homilist divides all men into two classes, which may be termed the externalists and the charismatics.

The externalists include all who do not seek *apatheia* through an experience of the Holy Spirit. Some give no thought to interior purity of heart, being content with an upright life (*bios orthos*).⁵⁶ of actions that conform to an exterior moral code. Those who are still on the lowest level of the Christian life also belong to this stage, which Symeon-Macarius calls by a favorite phrase of Clement of Alexandria and Origen: *apochē ton kakōn*, abstinence from evil.⁵⁷ In Homily 17, 15, Macarius is asked how some of the common people could say, «I fast, lead a wandering life, and give away my goods; therefore I am holy.» The concept that such renunciations constitute perfection is largely based on Christ's words to the rich young man, «If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast...» in Matthew 19:21. Cassian,

⁵³ Hom. 45, 7, p. 300. See Hausherr, *L'erreur fondamentaliste*, pp. 349-350.

⁵⁴ Hom. 27, 17, cf. *The Great Letter*, in *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature*; Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius, ed. W. Jassak (Leiden, 1954), p. 249 ff.

⁵⁵ Hausherr, *L'erreur fondamentaliste*, p. 340 ff.

⁵⁶ Hom. 15, 48.

⁵⁷ Cf. *The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart*, II, p. 14 ff. and p. 41 ff.

like Origen before him, also opposed this equation of perfection with poverty and renunciation as too external, offering instead the common philosophical definition of *apatheia* as perfection and assimilating it with Christ's words about purity of heart and St. Paul's doctrine of *agapē* by identifying all three notions.⁵⁸ Symeon-Macarius comments: «Abstinence from evil (*he apochē ton kakōn*) is not perfection, but if you enter your evil mind and kill the serpent in the inner mind and the deeper thoughts... (for the heart is an abyss).» And he goes on to say that all philosophers and all the people of the Old Testament have always sought purity of heart, which is attainable only through Christ and the foolishness of the cross.⁵⁹ Likewise in the *opusculum De custodia cordis*, probably a compilation and paraphrase made from the works of Symeon-Macarius by Simeon Metaphrastes in the eleventh century, we read that *he apochē ton kakōn*, the struggle against evil, is not perfection even when accompanied by «forced» good works without «purity of the inner man» and *katharsis*, but is merely the first step to them.⁶⁰ It is insufficient because it is still on the level of the Old Law and does not come up to the ethical demands of the New Testament.

In answer to the question, «What fruit does God look for in us?» Symeon-Macarius teaches that Christ requires something more than the justice of the Law: «With the coming of Christ God seeks another fruit and another justice: purity of heart, a good conscience, useful words, chaste and good thoughts, and all the good order of holiness.»⁶¹ Many other passages make the same point:

«If you say, 'I do not commit manifest fornication or adultery, nor do I incur the crime of avarice; consequently, I am just', you are totally deceived in thinking you have fulfilled everything. There are not only three kinds of sin to guard against, but myriads. Temerity, arrogance, lack of faith, hatred, envy, deceitfulness, hypocrisy—what of them? Should you not take up the struggle and fight against these things in your secret thoughts?»⁶²

⁵⁸ *Conferences*, I, 6 and 7. This theological question is also discussed in the *Apophthegmata*: cf. Hypocriticos, 6, P.G. 65, 429 D, and Syncretica's answer when asked if perfect good consisted in possessing nothing (*tektemosune*), Syncretica, 5, P.G. 65, 421 D. See also Diadochus of Photice, *Capita centum de perfectione spirituali*, Ch. 65 and 66 (P.G. 65, 1189-1190) and the *Four Instructions* attributed to Ananias, 4 (P.G. 11, pp. 456-458). St. Thomas Aquinas takes up the question in IIa-IIae, q. 189, a. 3; 189, a. 8; 189, a. 7; poverty is not perfection, but only a means. See also Ninos or Ancrea, *Peri akriasmōnes*, P.G. 79, 966-1060.

⁵⁹ Hom. 17, 15.

⁶⁰ P.G. 34, 824 A. In Symeon-Macarius' own thought the connection between the lower and higher levels was not as close, since it was bridgeable only by «baptism in the Spirit.» Cf. Hom. 47, 1 and 13.

⁶¹ Hom. 13, p. 119. Cf. *Great Letter*, p. 202, line 20 ff.

⁶² Hom. 3, 4.

Those who get no farther than this lower stage of *apoclie* and forced good works, the level of the Old Testament, will be given some degree of heavenly reward but not the full possession of the Kingdom. In Homily 40, 3, ⁶⁸ Symeon-Macarius is asked, «Since some sell their possessions, free their slaves, and fulfill the commandments, but do not try to obtain the Spirit in this world, will those who live in this way not go into the kingdom of heaven?» The answer is that there are varying degrees both in heaven and in hell.

Symeon-Macarius sometimes links these externalists who «do not try to obtain the Spirit in this world» with philosophers and intellectuals:

«There are many who concern themselves about external things and apply themselves to scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*), giving attention to an upright life, thinking this to be perfection, and not looking into the heart nor seeing the evil intermingled in the soul.»⁶⁹

Not realizing that true moral conduct depends upon the heart, whence evil spreads to the other members, they talk about the heavenly banquet without having eaten of it.⁷⁰ Other philosophers or *sophoi* share his own ideals, since they talk eloquently about perfection, having the Holy Spirit, and *apathēia*, without having the working and experiential certitude (*energeia kai pleroforia*).⁷¹ Christian intellectuals—one thinks of the Origenists, the followers of Evagrius, the Capadocians—tend to give too much stress to scientific knowledge.

«Often an uneducated man (*idiotēs*) goes to pray. He bends his knee, and his mind enters into rest (*anapsūsis*). As he dies and delves, he breaks through the opposing wall of evil and enters into vision and wisdom, where the wise and the rhetors are not able to come, that they might understand and know the subtlety of his mind, since he is attending to the divine mysteries. For one who is inexperienced in recognizing pearls does not know how to evaluate them, because of his lack of experience.»⁷²

The Criterion of Experience

In contrast to these are the charismatics, probably for the most

⁶⁸ Hom. 40, 3.
⁶⁹ Hom. 15, 46.
⁷⁰ Ibid.
⁷¹ Hom. 16, 10.
⁷² Ibid.
⁷³ Hom. 15, 15.

part the members of the Messalian brotherhoods. They believe in purification through an experience of the Holy Spirit «in this world» and have been granted at least some of the lesser charisms, though few if any could be expected to have attained *agape* and the resultant *apathēia*. These are the true Christians, who have perceived the taste of grace and have the sign of the cross in their minds and in their hearts.⁷⁴ He concedes that there are many degrees and levels in Christianity, since the Christian develops to maturity only slowly and gradually, in a manner analogous to human physical and mental growth.⁷⁵ But he implies that the true Christians are those who have some charismatic experience, or are at least seeking the experience of the Holy Spirit and purity of heart. It comes as something of a surprise that Symeon-Macarius teaches that most of the members of this class of charismatics are also on the level of *apoclie ton kakon* and *dipsuchia*, along with the externalists and the *sophoi*. They are, however, or they should be, aware of their state. Those whom the homilist calls «the world» are tossed to and fro by evil spirits working within them, but are ignorant of the real forces behind their evil thoughts, «thinking them to be natural.» On the other hand, those who are illuminated by the peace of Christ are fully aware of the source and the seriousness of these vicious impulses.⁷⁶

Indeed, Symeon-Macarius' principal message to all might be stated as «Recognize your *dipsuchia* and work and pray for full *koinonia* and *agape* to overcome it.»

The Dangers of Mystical Illusion

Many erroneously believe that they are sinless and have attained *apathēia*, often on the basis of a few «mystical» experiences. A man seeks and finds grace, and grace occupies two members of his soul or heart. The inexperienced and foolish man will then think that grace has obtained complete control over every member and that sin has been eradicated. Actually, most of the soul is still under the domination of sin: such a person is ignorant and deluded.⁷⁷ Symeon-Macarius considers this illusion extremely dangerous, since it must result either in a deceptive self-satisfaction and security or, after an

⁷⁴ Hom. 15, 42. New. Hom. 28 is especially clear as to the necessity of feeling the Spirit in order to be saved.
⁷⁵ Hom. 15, 41-42. Some of these stages are enumerated in Hom. 47, an allegory of the passover, exodus, and entrance into the Promised Land.
⁷⁶ Hom. 15, 50.
⁷⁷ Hom. 50, 4.

experience of sin or even of temptation, in bitter disillusion and despair.⁷³ No less dangerous, however, is the mistake of those who perceive only their sins and defects and do not notice the workings of the Holy Spirit in themselves.⁷⁴

Symeon-Macarius does his best to persuade his hearers that whether or not they have received a few charisms and mystical graces, until they have attained purity of heart, they are still in the state of the old man, the *apocôte ton kakon*, and essentially unredeemed:

«Our heart is not yet sprinkled with the blood of God, but is still the pit of hell... not yet have we received the exultation of the salvation of Christ, but the roots of the snares of death are still infixed in us... Not yet are we the temples of the Holy Spirit...»⁷⁵

This series of «not yet's» contrasts with his affirmations of the redemption having taken place in the heart. Here Symeon-Macarius is no doubt speaking of the experienced fact that if sin (concupiscence) was dethroned from the heart by the redemption, it remained within the soul.

The Higher Levels

Among the charismatics—those who have experienced the Spirit—Symeon-Macarius distinguishes two classes, the «prudent» and the «great.» The prudent (*fromimoi*), equivalent to the imperfect, are on the level of what Clement of Alexandria calls *enkrateia*, self-control. They react with anger against evil desires from the *pathe* and do not allow Satan to enter. Hence even if sensual thoughts should happen to arise within them, they are not made unclean thereby and do not commit interior sin. On the level of the great, who are the perfect (*ta metra ton megalon*), the passions are extinct and dried up. They are the true *monazontes* (monks, solitaries), who in a spiritual sense

«go out naked from the world and go down into the depths of the sea, whence they gather and bring up precious stones for the crown of Christ, for the heavenly Church, for the new age, for the shining city and the angelic people.»⁷⁶

In contrast to the philosophers, who talk without personal expe-

⁷³ Hom. 17, 5-6.
⁷⁴ Hom. 50, 4.
⁷⁵ Hom. 25, 3-4.
⁷⁶ Hom. 15, 50.

rience, they are the familiars and heirs of the king who eat and drink at his table.⁷⁷

This is the stage of grace and of the Holy Spirit, for which all should strive, even though it cannot be directly attained by human effort but must come as a gift from God. But God gives the Spirit when he sees men desiring this gift and working for virtue. In this sense, becoming spiritual depends on the free will, as God rewards the violence men do to themselves when they force themselves to do good works without the spontaneous inner impulse of grace to lead them to do so freely.⁷⁸ Hausher remarks upon «The frequency of *blazestilai heauton* (do yourself violence) in Pseudo-Macarius!»⁷⁹ Those in the intermediate stage of the *fromimoi* struggle against their thoughts in the fear of God and experience many afflictions, while steadfastly continuing to knock by prayer and desire for God to open and to give them entry into a state of grace through the «baptism in the Holy Spirit.»⁸⁰

Among the perfect, those who have received grace, Symeon-Macarius notes in Homily 17 various modes of self-support and service—an interesting variety in view of the classic belief in prayer as the only activity attributed to the Messalians. Like Aphraates, he prefers a life of service through sharing one's gifts of knowledge and experience with others to a life of pure contemplation: «Some who have grace have concern (*merimnosin*) only for their own affairs; others try also to help other souls: the latter are greatly superior to them.»⁸¹ The greatest of all, however, are those who live far away from the gatherings of men—a most exceptional preference for the eremitical life in the Macarian corpus.⁸² Although Symeon-Macarius considers freedom from worldly cares extremely important, he accepts the Messalian virtue of *amertinna*, carelessness, only up to a point; indeed, in Homily 17 he is actually anti-*amertinna* in two senses: (1) as the absence of all concern and responsibility for others for the sake of one's own spiritual life, and (2) using the word as a biblical equivalent for *apatheia*, he opposes it in the sense of an unrealistic belief in the possibility of achieving freedom from the passions after only five or six years—«I tell you, even the apostles, who had the Paraclete, were

⁷⁷ Hom. 16, 10.
⁷⁸ Hom. 37, 9-10.
⁷⁹ *Les Orientaux connaissent-ils les «mitras» de saint Jean de la Croix?*, in *Hésychisme et Prière* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 176; Rome, 1966), 102.
⁸⁰ Hom. 11, 14.
⁸¹ Hom. 17, 8.
⁸² *Ibid.* See Dörries' note here.

not completely *amerrimoi*. Joy and exultation were mixed with fear and trembling, coming from grace itself, not from the evil part. But grace itself protected them so they swerved not the least bit.⁸³

Apatheia from Agape

This raises the question as to whether Symeon-Macarius actually believed in the possibility of *apatheia* during the present life. We have seen that he does not place unquestioning trust in spiritual experience, since he warns repeatedly that grace can be lost even after an experience of God.⁸⁴ However, when the soul tastes and experiences the Holy Spirit in «full *koinonia*, that is, *agape*,» it attains *apatheia* or purity of heart through this singleness of love.⁸⁵ «One who has attained *agape* is conquered and inebriated, plunged and caught up in another world, as if not feeling his own nature.»⁸⁶ Symeon-Macarius says several times that since «charity never fails» (I Cor. 13:8), one who has attained charity and has purity of heart cannot fall: «The end of the commandment is charity from a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned» (I Tim. 1:5). «Such a one does not fall.»⁸⁷ «He who has these degrees [the lesser charisms] falls; he, however, who has *agape* cannot fall.»⁸⁸ As in the case of Origen, however, other statements seem to contradict this affirmation. It is possible to fall even from the heights of perfection. In order not to fall, the main thing is to always keep tending toward God with an unceasing *memoria Dei*, ever seeking and desiring without being content with the mystical graces already received.⁸⁹ It is when the mind and heart are not concentrated on God but are dissipated by worldly cares or by pride that there is danger of a fall.⁹⁰ Symeon-Macarius is certainly concerned with inculcating the importance of *apatheia*; of equal concern, however, is to teach the slowness of the process of purification and the extreme rarity of its achievement.⁹¹ In fact, he states, «I have not yet seen a perfect and free Christian man,» that is, one in whom charity fully reigns.⁹² «Truly I have not

⁸³ Hom. 17, 4-7.
⁸⁴ Hom. 8, 3; 27, 4 and 7; 10, 3. Cf. Mores, p. 501.
⁸⁵ Hom. 45, 7; cf. Hom. 27, 14.
⁸⁶ Hom. 27, 16.
⁸⁷ Hom. 27, 12.
⁸⁸ Hom. 27, 14.
⁸⁹ Hom. 15, 37-38; Hom. 27, 12. Cf. Hom. 46, 3 and *Great Letter*, p. 261.
⁹⁰ Hom. 27, 18.
⁹¹ Hom. 17, 11.
⁹² Hom. 8, 5.

yet seen one free. Again I have partially arrived at one time at that degree, and I have known that no man is perfect.»⁹³ Hence, as for Origen, *apatheia* is for him more an ideal than something to be expected.

Nevertheless, it is possible even for souls who have been only partially purified and spiritualized to receive the divine light in their hearts and to be rapt in *theoria*.⁹⁴ This is a return to the state of Adam before the Fall, when the first man saw God with the eyes of the heart, before these eyes were blinded by sin and man lapsed into forgetfulness.⁹⁵ After sanctification by Christ and transformation by his Holy Spirit, the new man receives new eyes, as well as new ears and a new tongue.⁹⁶ With the coming of grace, the veil of evil thoughts and worldly cares which the Devil had placed over the heart is removed, and the soul, having become pure and regained the natural state in which it was created, sees with its pure eyes the Sun of Justice in the depths of its heart.⁹⁷ Although this is the reward of the just in the Kingdom, even now some can participate in it by being rapt out of this world into heaven: «For just as the visible eye, if it is pure, always purely sees the sun, so also the *nous* that is in perfect purity always sees the glory of Christ»⁹⁸—which is almost pure Platonism.

Purity of Heart

Throughout the Pseudo-Macarian corpus purity of heart is identified with *apatheia* in a convergence of the great Judeo-Christian expectation of a purification by the Holy Spirit and the Hellenistic doctrine of *apatheia*, freedom from bodily passions, as a requisite for union with God and contemplation. The *Great Letter*, the first part of which deals with the *skopos* or goal of the ascetic life, states repeatedly that this goal is nothing other than purity of heart.⁹⁹

As we have seen, purity of heart and *apatheia* are also equated with *agape* as a more positive aspect, on the basis of St. Paul's teachings that charity constitutes perfection. These three in turn are

⁹³ *Ibid.*
⁹⁴ Hom. 8, 3.
⁹⁵ Hom. 45, 1.
⁹⁶ Hom. 44, 1. Cf. K. RAHNER, *Le début d'une doctrine des cinq sens spirituels chez Origène*, in *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, 13 (1952), 143.
⁹⁷ Hom. 17, 3.
⁹⁸ Hom. 17, 4.
⁹⁹ *Great Letter*, pp. 190-191.

closely related to, if not identical with, the *pleroforia* of the Spirit, which reciprocally results from and causes purity of heart-*apatheia* and charity.¹⁰⁶ The criterion as to whether or not one possesses these qualities is experience, especially the ability to engage in pure prayer, unencumbered with evil thoughts and undistracted by worldly cares.¹⁰⁷ Pure prayer and the pure heart are essentially one thing.

Besides the psychological criterion of a joyful experience of the Spirit, there is another test which belongs to the moral order. The sign of purity of heart is great joy and absence of judgment of anyone, «whether Greek or Jew, sinner or worldly» but being happy about all and «loving Greeks and Jews».¹⁰⁸ And, «Judge no one... For this is purity of heart, that when you see sinners or weaklings you feel sympathy and mercy for them.»¹⁰⁹ Dörries points out that «In the *Apophthegmata*, Poinen 97, *katharotes* is also seen as the absence of judgment.»¹¹⁰ Basil, however, who is usually so eager to carry out the commandment of the New Testament, one of the most important of which is, «Judge not and you shall not be judged» (Mt. 7:1), here seems to feel the necessity to oppose this definition of the sign of purity of heart. For him the sign is a hatred and horror of sin in oneself and in others, with «a certain fearful sympathy» toward sinners.¹¹¹ This sympathy is apparently a fear of the possibility that he might follow their example which leads him to avoid their company.

The experience of joy, of course, is also a common traditional criterion for distinguishing the possession or inspiration by the Holy Spirit, according to the classic theme of *diakrisis* or discernment of spirits. The Messalians and Symeon-Macarius, however, were too simplistic in tending to relate joy in every case to the Holy Spirit (despite the latter's teaching regarding the value of affliction and the cross), unlike Ammonas or Diadochus of Photice, who taught that spiritual delights were given to *beginners*.¹¹² Such a lack of discernment in their doctrine is a fundamental error indeed, and one that must inevitably lead to all sorts of erroneous assumptions. Symeon-Macarius sought to prevent some of the possible harmful consequences with his warning that *dipsuchia* can exist along with such experiences; he never questioned, however, the basic assumption that they

¹⁰⁶ *Hom.* 16, 43.

¹⁰⁷ *Hom.* 15, 13 and 15. A similar test is mentioned in the *Historia Monachorum*. Cf. *infra*.

¹⁰⁸ *Hom.* 8, 6.

¹⁰⁹ *Hom.* 15, 8, p. 131.

¹¹⁰ P.G. 65, 345 B. Cf. *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien*, p. 33, note 129. See also the instructions attributed to Ammonas 1,4 and 4,7, P.O. 11, pp. 456 and 475.

¹¹¹ Cf. *The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart*, IV, notes 229 and 230.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 283. See Hausherr, *Le terrain fondamental*, p. 358.

truly signified some sort of grace. It is interesting to note a renewal of interest in spiritual experience in our day, especially in the movement of Catholic Pentecostalism in the United States, a movement which has a direct historical relationship to the fifty spiritual homilies of Symeon-Macarius.¹¹³

Conclusion

The Macarian «*mystique du coeur*» is certainly more than the simple Syrian teaching of the Two Spirits and the prevention of doubt and blindness that we find in the writings of Aphraates, where the blindingness that we find in the writings of Aphraates, where the baptism of the Church is said to confer the Holy Spirit. Nor is it a mere continuation of the popular spirituality taught in Egypt by Ammonas and Pachomius, although Symeon-Macarius' teaching resembles theirs in his expectation of some sort of «Spirit-baptism.» Like the Origenist monastic spirituality in both its Cappadocian and Evagrius forms, it is an elaboration of a more primitive scheme, though somewhat more philosophically unsophisticated.

In many ways Symeon-Macarius is very close to Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. Gribomont remarks: «Vocabulaire et thèmes abordés montrent que les fraternités [de Basile] sont animées de l'esprit qui, un peu plus tard, s'exprimera chez Symeon-Macaire; intelligence, fermeté, Basile en engage le meilleur, tout en veillant avec fermeté aux déviations. Après Basile, son frère Grégoire a travaillé dans le même sens.»¹¹⁴

In comparing the Macarian spirituality of the heart with that of St. Basil, the main difference that we note is Basil's stress on the place of Christian life and moral conduct as a source and result of purity of heart. No less opposed to mere externalism than Symeon-Macarius, Basil did not hold that human actions and conduct belong *per se* to the realm of the external and hence lack importance. In particular, he emphasized the commandment of love of neighbor. For Symeon-Macarius, before the reception of «Spirit-baptism» moral effort is useless, except to move God to grant the Spirit, since it is without grace. No action is of value unless it arises from a pure disposition; hence, the main object of endeavour is to strive by prayer

¹¹³ Cf. KILIAN McDONNELL, *I Believe That I Might Experience*, in *Continuum*, 5 (Winter, 1968), 673-683; *The Holy Spirit and Pentecostalism*, in *Commonweal*, 88 (November 8, 1968), 156-204; and *The Ideology of Pentecostal Conversion*, in *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 5 (Winter, 1968), 105-106.

¹¹⁴ *Le monachisme au sein de l'Eglise en Syrie et en Cappadoce*, p. 22.

and by continual, though inevitably unsuccessful, moral effort to obtain this disposition as a gift from God. Trying to carry out the commandment belongs to a lower level of the spiritual life and involves one in externalism. The thing to do is to obtain the gift of *agape*, love of God, the Spirit, purity of heart, from which love of neighbor and the ability to carry out all the rest of the commandments will certainly flow. Like Philoxenus of Mabhog's monastic correspondent,¹⁰⁹ Symeon-Macarius tries to avoid the level of the moral-ascetical, the keeping of the commandments, by a sort of short-cut to the mystical. Basil, on the other hand, does not believe that mystical experience is primarily what saves. For him, as for the Pachomians, *memoria Dei*, attention, pure prayer, and monotropy mean not only having the mind occupied with God, but also, and primarily, in the biblical sense, seeking to do God's will in all one's actions.

The intellectualist, Evagrius, school also had a doctrine of discernment on the basis of feeling, emotion, in the spiritual life: all strong emotion and agitation is bad because it constitutes a distraction from contemplation, the supreme value. This is a departure from the traditional basis for *diakrisis*, as taught by Ammonas, for instance, which is that agitation in those who are sincerely seeking God is a sign of an evil spirit, although in a hardened sinner it may be an indication of God's grace. For Symeon-Macarius too, a feeling of agitation may be evil, not because it ruffles the calm of contemplation but because it is an indication of the presence of moral evil in the form of concupiscence. In this respect, despite his experientialism and psychologism, he remains on the biblical and especially New Testament level of morality, expressed in conduct but essentially a matter of the inner motives. He errs, however, in making freedom from concupiscence or from the impulse to evil the ideal goal of the Christian life, even though his experience shows him that the human condition in this life is the state of *dipsuchia* and that very few if any reach the ideal of *apatheia*. In spite of his attempt to clarify and order the existing confusion as to the reception of the Spirit and the resulting *apatheia*, his teaching is filled with the same contradictions as other even more primitive spiritualities which rest on the same assumptions—*apatheia* as the result of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the goal of the Christian life—but make no efforts to reconcile the contradictions that are involved. The only possible resolution is the one given by St. Paul but unfortunately forgotten by many who

¹⁰⁹ Cf. I. HAUSMANN, *Contemplation et sainteté. Une remarquable mise au point par Philoxène de Mabhog*, in *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, 14 (1933), 171-195.

came after him, largely because of Gnostic de-eschatologizing: the eschatological gift of the Spirit and the purification of the heart are only partially realized in the Christian life as a «pledge» to be brought gradually to a greater perfection but to be completely fulfilled only after the Resurrection. Among the Fathers one of the best theological developments of this New Testament teaching was Origen's doctrine of baptism and purification of the heart as a continuum, progressing during this life and reaching perfection in the next world with the baptism of fire.

THE SCHOOL OF EVAGRIUS PONTICUS

The primary role of purity of heart in the «intellectualist»¹¹⁰ spirituality of Evagrius and Cassian is well known. Since detailed studies of their doctrine on this matter already exist,¹¹¹ we follow will be no more than a brief and schematized summary included for the sake of completeness.

To begin with Evagrius himself, he divides the spiritual life into two stages: the *praktike*, practical or active phase, and the *gnostike* or *theoretike*, the contemplative or mystical phase. These two phases overlap to some extent, since contemplation is needed to complete the task of purification. As a matter of fact, purifications extend throughout the spiritual life: «gnosis, contemplation, is itself purifying.»¹¹² The goal of the active life is the purification of the mind from the passions. It is termed equally *katharotes* and *apatheia*: for *Katharotes estin apatheia logikes psuches*.¹¹³

The passions are set in motion by demons and give rise to thoughts, *logismoi*, within the soul. Evagrius distinguishes eight principal thoughts,¹¹⁴ which later were reduced to seven and became the seven capital sins. After the *logismoi* are overcome through the familiar means of monastic asceticism, including the use of counter-thoughts or «anti-rhetoric»,¹¹⁵ the passions are expelled and *apatheia*

¹¹⁰ This is Hausmann's term for the Origenist current of spirituality. Cf. *Les grands courants de la spiritualité orientale*, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 1 (1935), 121-124.

¹¹¹ Cf. S. MARSHALL, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico. Dottrina sulla cortia e contemplazione (Sinula Anselmiana, 5)*, Rome, 1936, and M. OLESEN-GALLAND, *La pureté de cœur d'après Cassien*, in *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, 17 (1936), 28-60.

¹¹² I. HAUSMANN, *Contemplation chez les Grecs et autres orientaux chrétiens*, D.S. II, 1777-1778.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 56, in W. FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus* (Berlin, 1912), 605, 182 b.

¹¹⁴ Cf. I. HAUSMANN, *L'origine de la théorie orientale des huit péchés capitaux*, in *Orientalia Christiana*, 30 (no. 86), 164-175.

¹¹⁵ Evagrius wrote a book with the title *Antirhetikos* containing Scriptural arguments to use against demonic temptations from each of the eight principal sins or evil thoughts.

or *katharotes* attained. A further purification results from the elimination of «simple thoughts» or discursive reasoning through the lower forms of contemplation. Hausherr locates both of these purifications at the end of the *praktike*. At this point charity, *agape*, arises as the result of *apatheia* or purity and as its positive aspect.¹¹⁶

The contemplative phase which follows is made up of the *pure*, or natural contemplation, divided into a second and a first degree which are a human knowledge of the essences of bodily things and an angelic knowledge of spiritual things, and the *theologike*, or the knowledge of God through a kind of reflection of His light in the intellect, this knowledge having its summit in the gnosis of the Holy Trinity.¹¹⁷

Evagrius makes little use of the Scriptural term *heart* but prefers to speak of *katharotes* as a quality of the *psyche*¹¹⁸ or the *nous*.¹¹⁹ Yet the study of the term and concept of purity of heart in preceding Christian writers, especially Clement of Alexandria and Origen, indicates unmistakably that Evagrius' *katharotes* is the *katharotes tes kardias* of Origen, for whom, to be sure, it was a Scriptural homonym for *apatheia* and Platonist *katharotes*, but at the same time one which kept its biblical and specifically New Testament content as a state of freedom from «evil thoughts».¹²⁰

Cassian's system closely parallels that of Evagrius, on whom he depends to a great extent. His stress on the interior and spiritual character of Christian asceticism certainly «represents one of the themes most commonly developed among the masters of the Orient whom Cassian claims as his authorities.»¹²¹ Like Evagrius, Cassian speaks of two phases, active and contemplative. The term of the first, however, is *purity cordis*, a phrase which expresses Evagrius' *apatheia*.¹²² Dom Marsili has shown that purity of heart in Cassian is equivalent to *apatheia* and *katharotes* in Evagrius. He suggests that the reason why Cassian, who borrowed so many Greek terms from Evagrius, avoided this word is because it was rendered suspect by being connected with the Pelagian controversy.¹²³ In this matter, then,

¹¹⁶ Cf. Marsili, p. 117.

¹¹⁷ *Praktikos*, I, 3. Cf. Hausherr, *Contemplation*, 175-176; Id., *Evagri le Pontique*, D.S., IV, 173-179; G. BARDY, *Apollinaire*, D.S., I, 734-735.

¹¹⁸ Cf., for example, *Praktikos*, I, 50, P.G., 40, 123 B; *Centuries*, 4, 70, FRANKENBERG, 305.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Gnostikos*, 151, FRANKENBERG, 553; Letter 62, FRANKENBERG, 611.

¹²⁰ Cf. the four preceding studies, especially *The Monistic Concept of Purity of Heart and Its Sources*, IV.

¹²¹ Cf. O'DONOGHUE, p. 28.

¹²² *Conlationes*, I, 4-8, S.C., 42, pp. 80-87.

¹²³ Marsili, p. 115, note 1.

Cassian went back beyond Evagrius to the usage of Origen himself, as well as to the vocabulary of popular monasticism.

Two of the most literary in character of the Egyptian monastic writings, the *Historia Monachorum* and the *Lausiac History*,¹²⁴ both show strong Origenist and Evagriian influence. A passage from the former work containing John of Lycopolis' advice to the visiting monks from Jerusalem is typical of the concept of purity held in the intellectualist school. Instead of going on monastic travel tours, he tells them, they would do better to

«See rather if all goes well with you in your prayers, if the purity of your understanding (*dianoia*) is not disturbed, if your mind (*nous*) does not undergo movements of agitation when it stands before God in prayer; that no alien thought (*logismos*) furtively enters into you and turns your mind elsewhere; that no memory or unclear imaginations (*enluminations*) importune your understanding... See that no passion troubles you» (some examples are honor, glory, hypocritical affectation of holiness, memories of relatives, or any memories whatsoever...) «If not, the whole business becomes useless, when one tries to talk to the Lord and is carried away by evil thoughts (*logismoi*). This wandering of the mind is experienced by everyone who has not completely renounced the world, but is still moved by the desire to please it. For frequent bodily and earthly thoughts divide (*merizontai*) his understanding, and since he is engaged in fighting against the passions, he is not able to see God.»¹²⁵

This is very similar to the teaching of Symeon-Macarius and others that purity of prayer from distractions is an indication of purity of heart or *apatheia*. One senses, however, that Symeon-Macarius' main concern is for the elimination of *dipsychia* and the achievement of purity of heart, which he believes to be the moral ideal of the New Testament, whereas for Evagrius and John of Lycopolis the attainment of mystical prayer is more important.

The means of attaining purity mentioned by John are the traditional ones: «strive by means of asceticism to attain to *apatheia* of the appetites.»¹²⁶ Even more effective is to seek silence and endless contemplation, «so that, in your prayers to God, you may keep your mind pure.»¹²⁷ This is better than active charity, even though such acts fulfill the evangelical commandments, because the mind engaged

¹²⁴ The *Lausiac History*, which is not primarily concerned with spiritual doctrine, adds nothing new to the monastic doctrine of purity of heart.

¹²⁵ A.-J. FESTUGIER, ed., *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* (Subsidia hagiographica, 34, Brussels, Société des Bollandistes, 1961), I, 23-26, pp. 17-18.

¹²⁶ *Hist. mon.*, I, 29, p. 19.

¹²⁷ *Hist. mon.*, I, 62, pp. 33-34.

in contemplation is not occupied with earthly things.¹² Unlike Basil, who used the Gospel commandments as the highest norm, John of Lycopolis subordinates Christ's teachings concerning charity to a Platonist concept of the superiority of heavenly to earthly matters.

On the level of *praktike*, the spiritual combat, we find some less abstract and apparently more primitive ideas in the *Historia monachorum*, which, however, could very well also derive from Origenism. Like the more Jewish-Christian spirituality of Aphrates, Ammonas, and Pachomius, the Evagrian school also stresses the war against demons, passions, and evil thoughts.¹³ Abba Pityrion, thought to be Ammonas' successor at Pispir, «said that there are certain demons attached to our passions who often turn our character towards evil. Whoever, then, wishes to chase away the demons should begin by mastering the passions. For any passion that is brought under domination also has its demon chased away.»¹⁴ In the Evagrian «intellectualist» system, this moral and spiritual purity is definitely sought for the sake of intellectual purity, as a preparation for the pure prayer to which it is ordered.

ΑΠΟΦΙΤΕΓΜΑΤΑ

A product in the nucleus of its written form of the age of diaspora and decline towards the middle of the fifth century,¹⁵ the *Apophthegmata Patrum* issued originally from oral rather than written sources and thus stands out from the more literary works of early monasticism such as the *Vita Antonii*, the *Historia Monachorum*, and the *Historia Lausaca*, as the result of direct experience.

As depicted in these sayings, the monk's life is one in which external asceticism—fasts, vigils, labor, a life of hardship—has an important place; but even more characteristic is the inner battle against the evil thoughts (*logismoi, cogitationes*) and the demons

¹² *Hist. mon.*, I, 63, p. 34.
¹³ For references to passages containing the word *logismoi* see A.-J. Festugière, ed. and trans., *Enquête sur les moines d'Égypte (Les moines d'Orient)*, IV/1, Paris, Cerf, 1964, p. 23, note 337.

¹⁴ *Hist. mon.*, 15, 2 and 3, p. 111.

¹⁵ It is probable that some written records existed as early as the middle of the fifth century, while the collection continued to grow until at least the seventh century. Three main forms are now in existence: the Greek alphabetical collection, the topical form in Latin, Coptic, Armenian, and Syriac versions, and a mixed collection in Latin. See W. Bousset, *Apophthegmata* (Tübingen, 1923); J.-C. Goy, *Recherches sur la tradition grecque des Apophthegmata Patrum* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 36; Brussels, Société des Bollandistes, 1962); D. J. Carrity, *The Desert a City* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1966); and J. Quastman, *Patrology*, III (Westminster, Md., Newman, 1960), 187-189.

who suggest them. This is the battle of the heart, *pugna cordis*. Antony is supposed to have said: «Qui sedit in solitudine, et quiescit, a tribus bellis eripitur; id est, auditus, locutionis, et visus; et contra unum tantummodo habebit pugnam, id est, cordis.»¹⁶ The Greek version of this same saying has, in place of *cordis, tes porneias*, fornication, indicating the nature of a large number, though not all, of the «evil thoughts» in question.¹⁷ The apophthegm also shows the relation between solitude, *hesychia*, and the war against evil thoughts. This had been stressed by Ammonas.¹⁸

A discussion in the form of answers by a much later elder to a disciple's questions on «the Ascetic Rule» of the first monastic generations gives an exegesis of the thinking behind the retirement to the desert for the sake of the «battle of the heart.»

«Why did Abba Anthony say unto Paul, his disciple, 'Go and dwell in silence that thou mayest receive the temptation of devils?'» The old man said, «Because the perfection of the monk ariseth from spiritual conduct, and spiritual conduct is acquired by the conduct of the heart, and purity of heart ariseth from the conduct of the mind, and the conduct of the mind from prayer which is unceasing, and from strife with devils; but unceasing praying and the contendings with devils, both in thoughts and in visions, have no opportunity for existence without silence and solitariness.»¹⁹

Origen had already said, citing Matthew 15:19, that the enemy proceeds from within and that the true battlefield is the heart.²⁰ Evagrius and Cassian taught, like the *Apophthegmata*, that this battle is particularly characteristic of the monk in solitude:

«The demons war against men of the world by means of great things, but against monks they fight more with thoughts; because of their solitude things are lacking; and just as it is easier to sin in thought than in act, so much the more troublesome and difficult is it to fight the war of the mind than the war of things...»²¹

The very closeness to God in prayer which is the result of their dedicated life makes the monks more aware of their sins and evil tendencies. «Abbot Matheos said: The closer a man comes to God,

¹⁶ *Verba Seniorum*, 2, 2, P.L., 73, 853 A.

¹⁷ Anthony, 11, P.G., 65, 77 C.

¹⁸ Cf. *The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart*, IV, p. 283 ff.

¹⁹ E. A. W. Budge, *The Paradise of the Fathers*, II (London, 1907), 287.

²⁰ In *Irenaeus*, 5, 2 (O.C.S., 7), p. 316.

²¹ Evagrius, *Praktikos*, 48, P.G., 40, 1248 B; Cassian, *De institutis coenobiorum*, 6, 9, P.L., 49, 278 A.

the more he realizes that he is a sinner. Isaias the prophet, when he saw God, called himself a miserable and unclean wretch.¹³⁸

After all, in attaching great importance to their inner thoughts the monks believed that they were only practicing the ethic of the New Testament. As Hausherr remarks, «la première révolution évangélique par rapport au judaïsme (les Pères l'ont souvent répété), c'est une intériorisation totale. Rien ne vaut que par le dedans...»¹³⁹ Sozomen expressly applies this contrast to the monks:

«Pure in heart and blameless in conduct, they faithfully performed their religious duties, and despised such outward observances as illustrations and instruments of sprinkling, for they believed that sin alone requires purging.»¹⁴⁰

Basil goes even further, contrasting not only ritual and moral purification but deeds and vices: «That as the Law prohibits wicked deeds, the Gospel forbids harboring the vices themselves concealed in the soul.»¹⁴¹ In the *Apophthegmata*, «A certain old man said: I urge you, brothers, as we repress (*comprestimus*) bad acts, let us also repress even thoughts.»¹⁴² Needless to say, this is repression in the sense of a conscious opposition, not unconscious psychological repression, which is something entirely different. Indeed, the monks strove to become as conscious as possible of their unconscious motivation as a means of integrating the whole self, conscious and unconscious.

Despite what is sometimes said about their «spiritual athleticism» and their preoccupation with merely external and corporal forms of penance—and there is a certain element of truth in these accusations—the desert fathers were well aware that perfection is inward. When Abba Agathon was asked which was the greater, bodily labor or the custody of the interior, he said:

«Man is like a tree; bodily labor is the leaves, the custody of the interior, the fruit. The Scriptures say, 'Every tree that does not bear good fruit shall be cut down and thrown in the fire (Mt. 3.10).' It is clear, then, that all our efforts should be directed toward the fruit, that is, toward the custody of the mind (*ten tou noos fulaken*). We also have need, however, of the covering and the adornment of the leaves, that is, bodily labor.»¹⁴³

¹³⁸ *Apophthegmata*, Matthei, 2, P.G., 65, 289 C.

¹³⁹ *L'hésychasme: Étude de spiritualité*, in *Hésychasme et prière*, p. 215.

¹⁴⁰ *Hist. Eccles.*, I, 12, P.G., 67, 882 B.

¹⁴¹ *Moralia*, 43, 1, P.G., 31, 761 C.

¹⁴² *P.L.*, 73, 928 D.

¹⁴³ Agathon, 8, P.G., 65, 112 B-C.

Bouyer well says that, according to St. Antony, «l'oeuvre intérieure» is «la grande oeuvre du moine» not to be slighted for the sake of any external task.¹⁴⁴

Many *apophthegmata* stress the central importance of the heart, whose fruit is good works. One of the most memorable is the following anonymous apophthegm, taken from the Latin collection:

«A certain old man said: It is written, 'The just man shall flourish like a palm tree.' This word means that the fruit of good works is high and straight and sweet. For in the palm tree there is a heart, and this heart is white and has all operation in itself. The just man is similar. His heart is one and simple, looking at God alone. It is also white, having the illumination of faith; and all the work (*operatio*) of the just man is in his heart, for his incentive is the battle against the devil.»¹⁴⁵

Realizing that every outward action has its origin within, and schooled to be aware of their inner processes, the monks became quite acute in analyzing the stages of passion. When questioned as to the meaning of the text, «Do not return evil for evil» (1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9), Abba Poemen said:

«This passion has four modes: the first from the heart, the second from the face, the third from the tongue, and the fourth from doing evil for evil. If you can purify your heart, it will not show in your face; if, however, it appears in your face, guard your speech; if you also speak, quickly cut it off, and do not do evil in return for evil.»¹⁴⁶

Enough has been written on the doctrine of the *Apophthegmata* concerning the manifestation of one's thoughts to a spiritual father, with its related attitudes of attention, sobriety, and custody of the heart, to warrant omitting a treatment of these subjects here. It should be noted, however, that if there are good Stoic antecedents for the doctrine of custody of the heart in the sense of sitting at the door of the heart and scrutinizing each thought that tries to enter,¹⁴⁷ there are also very good Old Testament antecedents for the practice of attention and *memoria Dei* in the sense of having the thought of

¹⁴⁴ L. BOUYER, *La Vie de S. Antoine. Essai sur la spiritualité du monachisme primitif* (St.-Vendrest, 1950), 131.

¹⁴⁵ *P.L.*, 73, 993-994.

¹⁴⁶ Poemen, 34, P.G., 65, 332 A.

¹⁴⁷ The expression «custody of the heart» used in the monastic sense of guarding the heart from evil thoughts is already to be found in the Pseudo-Clementines; see *The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart*, II, pp. 185-186 and p. 189. No doubt there was some Stoic influence here.

God, His saving deeds, and His will ever before one so as never to turn aside from the path of righteousness. Likewise there is good biblical basis for the doctrine of purity of intention, especially in the New Testament, and this idea can also be found in the *Apophthegmata*.

It seems, however, that some of the younger monks tended to presume too far as regards the saving power of purity of heart in the sense of a pure intention. Although the delightful story that follows is not taken from the *Apophthegmata* but is related by John Moschus in his *Spiritual Meadow*, it is too good to omit. An old monk rebuked a young monk whom he saw go into a tavern.

"The young man answered, 'Let be, venerable brother. God seeks nothing but a pure heart.' Then, lifting both his hands to heaven the old man said: 'Praise be to Thee, O God, for I have lived fifty years in Scete and I have not a pure heart; but this man who frequents taverns has a pure heart.' And turning to the brother, he said: 'May God both save you and confound not my hope!'"¹⁴⁸

Though the heart was all-important, the monks of the *Apophthegmata* considered asceticism a powerful aid toward achieving purity of heart. There were variations, however, in their answers to requests for a brief formula giving the most efficacious means. According to the Syriac version, the two great means of purifying the heart are unceasing prayer and the war against demons, both of which are possible only in the solitary monastic life.¹⁴⁹ Amma Synclitica stressed prayer and fasting for expelling evil thoughts.¹⁵⁰ Poemen noted, "We see three bodily actions in Abba Pambo: fasting daily until evening, silence, and great manual labor."¹⁵¹ These, of course, must be completed by spiritual actions, such as prayer and custody of the heart. Others named fasting, vigils, and the other exercises of the monastic life.¹⁵²

It was generally agreed that fasting and asceticism weakened the body and the impulse to *porneia*, while at the same time strengthening the soul.¹⁵³ To us the very real dangers of pride from such practices sometimes seem so great as to make them of doubtful value. The

¹⁴⁸ *Pratum spirituale*, I, 94, P.G., 87, 3, 307b.

¹⁴⁹ Boudh, p. 287.

¹⁵⁰ Synclitica, 3, P.G., 65, 421 B.

¹⁵¹ Poemen, 150, P.G., 65, 360 A.

¹⁵² P.L., 73, 881-882.

¹⁵³ Cf. H. Musurilo, *The Problem of Ascetical Fasting in the Greek Patristic Writers in Tradition*, 12 (1956), 1-64.

original Old Testament meaning of fasting, however, was humility: it was a means of making oneself spiritually poor, and this is the meaning assigned to it in the following apothegm uttered by the gentle Abba Moses:

"A brother asked: In all man's labor, what is it that helps him? The old man replied, 'It is God who helps. For it is written: Our God is a refuge and power, a helper in the exceeding tribulations that have come upon us (Ps. 45:2). The brother said: The fasts and vigils that a man does, what are they? The old man said: They make the soul humble. For it is written: See my humility and my labor and dismiss all my sins.'"¹⁵⁴

Many *apophthegmata* name prayer as the highest and most effective ascetical exercise.¹⁵⁵ We have noted this same teaching with regard to prayer throughout all sectors of early monastic spirituality. The ideal of constant prayer includes the attitudes of *nepes*—sobriety, vigilance—the fear of God, and the purifying action of the word of God.

But the war against evil thoughts and the forms of bodily asceticism will not avail for salvation without another very special kind of custody of the heart which several *apophthegmata* call "guarding the conscience with regard to the neighbor." Two brothers came to Abba Pambo to ask if they could be saved in the regimen they followed. One fasted two days, then ate two rolls; another worked and gave to the poor. Pambo answered: "These works are good; but if you guard your conscience with regard to your neighbor, you will be saved."¹⁵⁶ Mother Sarah calls this "Having the heart pure towards all men."¹⁵⁷ Abba Isaias, who is close to the generation that compiled the *Apophthegmata*, says: "If anyone wants to pray to God in the Holy Spirit and a pure heart, let him explore his soul before he goes to pray to see whether it harbors anything against anyone, and let him not deceive himself if he hears no one."¹⁵⁸

In fact, Poemen agrees with Symeon-Macarius that not judging others is the sign of purity of heart.¹⁵⁹ This insistence upon charity towards men in the spirituality of the *Apophthegmata* is a good guarantee of its evangelical authenticity.

¹⁵⁴ Ps. 24 (23):18, Moses, 18, P.G., 65, 288 C ff.

¹⁵⁵ For references, see *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien*, p. 22, note 40.

¹⁵⁶ Pambo, 2, P.G., 65, 368 C ff. Cf. Pambo, 11, 372 A.

¹⁵⁷ Sarah, 5, P.G., 65, 420 D.

¹⁵⁸ Isaias, *Confessions*, P.G., 40, 1154 A. See also Boudh, pp. 329 and 332.

¹⁵⁹ Poemen, 97, P.G., 65, 345 B. See above, p.

One of the most picturesque concepts of the desert fathers is the idea that after mastering the passions of the heart, the monk is master of wild creatures in a spiritual renewal of Adam's condition in Paradise:

"One of the Fathers said of Abba Paul, who was from Lower Egypt and lived in the Thebaid, that he could pick up horned lizards, scorpions, and serpents in his hands and break them in two. The brothers, humbly greeting him, begged him to tell them what he had done to obtain this grace. He replied: 'Forgive me, Fathers; if anyone obtains purity (*katharoteta*), all things are subject to him, as to Adam in Paradise, before he had broken the commandment.'¹⁴⁰

Purity of heart also bears fruit in the realm of knowledge, prudence, and contemplation, enabling a man to act as a spiritual father and to guide others with an apt word. Abba Silvanos was once asked, «In what sort of life (*politeia*) have you exercised yourself, Father, that you have gained such great prudence?» He answered: I have never retained in my heart a thought (*logismos*) that would anger God.¹⁴¹ And freedom from *logismoi* is purity of heart.

We have seen that Antony, Ammonas, and Pachomius taught that purity of heart results in certain charismatic gifts, such as visions, *diakrisis*, and *diorasis*. Though the fathers of the *Apophthegmata* discouraged seeking after visions, they shared something of their belief in a charismatic mysticism. Certain of the fathers admitted the truth of a remark made by a pagan priest who claimed to see many visions: «If you see nothing, you have evil thoughts in your heart which make you far from your God, and therefore he does not reveal to you his mysteries.» For, they said, «unclean thoughts make God withdraw far away from man.»¹⁴²

As for infused contemplation, there are of course many descriptions of contemplative states, ecstasies, etc., in the *Apophthegmata*. The sixth book of the *Vitae Patrum* is entitled, *De praevidentia sive contemplatione*. It is clear that in the desert, stripped of all attachments and distractions, men were able to live at their highest and

¹⁴⁰ Paul, I, P.G., 65, 381 A. Cf. Beaton, 12, 141; Pambo, 12, 372; and Silvanos, 12, 412.

¹⁴¹ Silvanos, 6, P.G., 65, 409 D.
¹⁴² Olympos, I, P.G., 65, 313 D.C. The notion seems to have been both Jewish and Egyptian. Josephus says that an Egyptian sage «seems to have shared in the divine nature as regards wisdom and foreknowledge of future events.» *Contra Apionem*, I, 232. Cited by R. M. Grant, *The Early Christian Doctrine of God* (Charlottesville, Va., 1966), p. 10, note 8. Indeed, the notion of clairvoyance is common to most primitive peoples.

deepest level, the level of the heart, and that they were often successful in their efforts to keep it pure from self-seeking and sin in order to see God.

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